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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 229
By Kisber

A RESOLUTION To require an inter-departmental study and report to the General Assembly on Autism and measures the State can take to serve the needs of children with Autism and their families.

WHEREAS, Children with Autism are a group with great needs; and

WHEREAS, These needs extend well beyond the medically necessary services that are provided by TennCare through its basic benefits, early and periodic screening, detection, treatment ("EPSDT") services, and waiver programs; and

WHEREAS, Children with Autism often have educational and social needs in other service domains; and

WHEREAS, Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder; and

WHEREAS, Symptom management, respite services such as those provided by Tennessee Voices for Children and case management can be provided to children if it is determined they have a co-occurring psychiatric disorder or are determined to be seriously emotionally disturbed ("SED"); and

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WHEREAS, SED status is defined as experiencing significant impairment of functioning in addition to having another psychiatric disorder besides a developmental or substance abuse or chemical dependency disorder; and

WHEREAS, Diagnostic and treatment services offered under the EPSDT program must meet medically necessary criteria if those services extend beyond basic, periodic screenings; and

WHEREAS, Other services are educational in nature, or both medical and educational in nature (such as speech therapy), leading to substantial complexity, overlap, and the potential for failure to meet adequately the needs of children with autism; and

WHEREAS, TennCare-funded services are only one source of funding, and there are limits to the scope of services that TennCare can provide since services must meet certain criteria; and

WHEREAS, Other states have taken a proactive approach such as developing university-based and specialized programs that coordinate and integrate services for children with autism and their families, while blending funding resources; and

WHEREAS, The array and complexity of needs and service requirements for children with Autism demonstrates the need for a comprehensive statewide plan for children; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That the departments of mental health and developmental disabilities, education, children's services, the TennCare bureau, and the Tennessee commission on children and youth conduct a study of current services and programs available for children with Autism and their families.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That these departments, the bureau, and the commission are authorized to consult with such other agencies and institutions of state government as they deem appropriate in conducting this study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That these departments prepare a proposal for a comprehensive statewide plan for coordinating services and maximizing their delivery.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this proposal plan be presented in the form of a report to the general assembly not later than January 31, 2002.